











Effective July 1, 2002, the Virginia Underground Utility Damage Prevention Act ("Act") was amended to require that any plastic or other nonmetallic utility lines installed underground shall be installed in such a manner as to be locatable.

### **Be a damage prevention partner.**

You can do your part by ensuring that any nonmetallic utility line that you install underground meets the requirements of the Act. By doing so, you will be complying with the law and helping reduce the possibility of the sewer line being bored through in the future, and most importantly protecting the citizens and communities you serve!

### **Underground Utility Color Codes**

-  RED - Electric Power Lines, Cables, Conduit and Lighting Cables
-  YELLOW - Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum or Gaseous Materials
-  ORANGE - Communications, Alarm or Signal Lines, Cables or Conduits
-  BLUE - Potable Water
-  PURPLE - Reclaimed Water, Irrigation and Slurry lines
-  GREEN - Sewer and Drain Lines
-  PINK - Temporary Survey Markings
-  WHITE - Proposed Excavation

This brochure should be used for educational purposes only. It is not intended to be an opinion, legal or otherwise, of the State Corporation Commission.

# Plumbers Beware!

A blocked sewer line may be the result of another utility line (gas, electric, telecommunications) having been accidentally bored through the sewer line.



Attempting to clear this type of blockage can result in a serious accident involving loss of life, injuries, and significant property damage.



Please follow the precautionary measures in this brochure to help prevent such accidents.



Prepared by

Virginia State Corporation Commission

Division of Utility and Railroad Safety

July 2007

## Facts

More and more utilities and their contractors install underground utility lines using trenchless technology. Before using such technology, excavators are required to call Miss Utility at 811 and request the marking of underground utility lines in the area of excavation. After existing utility lines are marked, excavators are required to hand dig and find these utility lines before they bore over or under the lines. If sewer lines are not marked or the excavators do not follow Virginia's trenchless excavation rules, excavators may end up "boring" through the sewer lines and leaving a utility line (gas piping, electric or telecommunication cables) inside the sewer line without even knowing it.

## Serious Danger

The presence of a utility line in a sewer line ("cross bore") can go undetected for months, even years. Eventually, a sewer backup develops and a plumber is called to remove the blockage. It is a common practice for plumbers to use a mechanical rotary device to root out the blockage. This process almost always damages the utility line that was bored through the sewer line. If an electric line is cut, the plumber runs the risk of electrocution. If a gas line is damaged, gas can migrate through the sewer lines into homes and buildings and result in a major accident that may involve deaths, injuries and significant property damage.

## ***Dig With CARE. Keep Virginia Safe!***

**C** Call Miss Utility @ 811 before you dig.

**A** Allow required time for marking.

**R** Respect the marks.

**E** Excavate carefully.



## Safety Precautions

Before starting the process of cleaning out a sewer line, remember to:

- Call 811 and request an emergency Miss Utility ticket to get the underground utility lines for the property marked;
- Inquire with the owner, occupant or building maintenance people to determine:
  - The location of the sewer facilities such as clean outs,
  - If there has been any recent excavation to install utility lines.
- If the markings for existing underground utility lines cross the path of the sewer line, it may be a cross bore that is causing the blockage.
- Use a camera to identify the location of the blockage. If the evidence of recent excavation or the marking for a utility line is the same distance from the building as the blockage, again, there may well be a cross bore causing the blockage.
- If you reasonably suspect or determine the blockage is caused by a cross bore,
  - Do not attempt to clear the blockage with a mechanical device.
  - Get help from the utility operator that may be involved.
  - Hand dig in the area where the blockage and or the cross bore may exist.
- If a cross bore is discovered,
  - Stop all work.
  - Contact the utility operator involved if not on site already.
  - If you suspect a natural gas leak by smelling, seeing or hearing gas escaping,
    - \* Leave and instruct others to leave the area;
    - \* Call 911;
    - \* Contact the gas company for the area;
    - \* Do not operate any equipment;
    - \* Eliminate any source of ignition;
    - \* Do not operate any pipeline equipment or facility;
    - \* Proceed with your work when the area is safe.